

Message Text

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SUBJECT: DIE WELT ARTICLE ON LAO OPIUM

REF: VIENTIANE 1090

TRANSLATION OF ARTICLE "LAOS: THE WORLD'S LARGEST DRUG DEALER" BY CARL HERMANN PUBLISHED IN DIE WELT JULY 13, 1977 FOLLOWS.

1. BY METHODICAL OPIUM CULTIVATION THE RED REGIME IN VIENTIANE SAVES ITSELF FROM BANKRUPTCY. ALMOST EVERY YEAR THE UNITED NATIONS CONCLUDES PROGRAMS FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF NARCOTICS PRODUCTION. INNUMERABLE CONFERENCES ARE HELD IN EAST AND WEST. THE GOVERNMENTS SWEAR ABSTINENCE. BUT ALL EFFORTS ARE IN VAIN, FOR ONE COUNTRY IS METHODICALLY PROMOTING OPIUM CULTIVATION AND IS ORGANIZING EXPORT ON A LARGE SCALE: LAOS, WHICH HAS BEEN GOVERNED BY COMMUNISTS FOR ALMOST TWO YEARS. WHILE THE ECONOMY OF LAOS HAS PRACTICALLY COLLAPSED, THE GOVERNMENT IN VIENTIANE HAS DISCOVERED AN EXPORT COMMODITY, I.E. THE OPIUM AND IN THE NEAR FUTURE ALSO

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THE (PROCESSED) MORPHINE BASE, WITH WHICH THIS HARDLY EXPLORED COUNTRY IS ABSOLUTELY WITHOUT COMPETITION.

2. OF COURSE, PRIME MINISTER KAYSONE PHOMVIHAN TRIES TO MAINTAIN HIS FACE. HE HAS ADOPTED THE ANTI-DRUG PROGRAM OF THE UNITED NATIONS. THERE EVEN IS AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT OF LAST SUMMER SAYING THAT THE

CULTIVATION OF POPPY IS TO BE CEASED COMPLETELY WITHIN FIVE YEARS. IN FACT, HOWEVER, IT IS BEING EXPANDED BY ALL POSSIBLE MEANS AND MEANWHILE HAS BECOME A STEADILY BUBBLING WELL OF HARD FOREIGN CURRENCY.

3. THE COMMUNIST PATHET LAO HAS DEVELOPED A DISSEMBLING SCHEME WHICH SEEMS TO BE UNIQUE IN THE WORLD. NO LESS THAN FOUR MINISTRIES IN VIENTIANE DEAL WITH OPIUM. IN ACCORDANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS, THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PREVENTION OF OPIUM CULTIVATION; IN FACT IT RIGOROUSLY PROSECUTES SALES TO ITS OWN POPULATION. THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH WILL, AS IT PROCLAIMS AGAIN AND AGAIN, CURE ALL LAOTIAN ADDICTS. THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE IS RATION-ALIZING POPPY CULTIVATION BY TEST PLANTATIONS, PLANT PRESERVATIVES AND FERTILIZER. THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY AND TRADE GOVERNS PURCHASE, TRANSPORTATION, AND SALES. THE ACTUAL SUPPLY OF WESTERN MARKETS HOWEVER IS IN THE HANDS OF CHINESE. WHATEVER QUANTITIES THE NARCOTICS POLICE IN THE EUROPEAN CAPITALS SEIZE, AS LONG AS THE STUFF IS PRODUCED, THE MARKET WILL NOT DRY OUT: THE BIG DEALERS MAKE PROFITS OF 1,000 PERCENT AND MORE. FOR AT LEAST ONE YEAR THE WAVE HAS SPILLED ALSO OVER THE RHINE RIVER. THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC FEELS THE PRESSURE OF A SATURATED MARKET. HASH IS "OUT" HERE; INSTEAD, HEROIN IS "IN". THE POLICE KNOW THAT AT LEAST LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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30,000 PEOPLE BETWEEN THE DANUBE AND THE ELBE ARE HEROIN ADDICTS. BUT THE POLICE DO NOT KNOW EVERYTHING. ONLY THOSE WHO ATTRACT ATTENTION GET INTO ITS FILES - AS BUYER, DEALER, OR ADDICT. FOR THE TIME BEING THE FIGURES MAY STILL SEEM TO BE MODERATE. THEY BECOME SIGNIFICANT ONLY IF ONE KNOWS THAT HEROIN ADDICTION IS ALMOST INCURABLE AND IF ONE BEGINS TO SEE THAT A HEROIN ADDICT HAS EVERY PROSPECT OF DYING MISERABLY WITHIN A RELATIVELY SHORT TIME.

4. IN 1970, GERMANS GOT EXCITED ABOUT THE PSYCHEDELIC EXPERIMENTS OF THEIR EXAGGERATED YOUTH GENERATION. ALMOST NO ONE DIED FROM SUCH ACTIVITIES UNLESS HE CHANGED TO HARDER DRUGS. AT THAT TIME, NO MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED INJECTED THEMSELVES TO DEATH WITH HEROIN. THIS YEAR IT WILL BE MORE THAN FIVE TIMES AS MANY. AND THE TREND IS UPWARD. IN FACT, MORE AND MORE HEROIN COMES TO EUROPE.

5. SUDDEN FLUCTUATIONS OF PRICES ARE OBVIOUSLY NOT CAUSED BY A REAL SHORTAGE OF RAW MATERIAL BUT BY THE MARKET STRATEGY OF THE SALES ORGANIZATIONS. THE METHOD

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IS CLEAR: TO EXPAND THE CIRCLE OF CONSUMERS A FREE
DOSAGE IS OFFERED. SOMETIMES THE SCENE IS FLOODED WITH
CHEAP STUFF, SOMETIMES THE "H", "BIRD-SEED", "HONGKONG
ROCKS" ARE SO EXPENSIVE THAT MILLIONAIRES ONLY CAN
SOOTH THEIR ADDICTION WITHOUT BECOMING CRIMINALS.
NORTH AMERICA HAS KNOWN THE PROBLEM SINCE THE
TWENTIES. THE SALE OF DRUGS, ASIDE FROM SLOT-MACHINES,
IS THE MOST IMPORTANT BRANCH OF ORGANIZED CRIME THERE,
FAR AHEAD OF PROSTITUTION WHICH IS SUFFERING MARKED
LOSSES UNDER THE PUBLIC LIBERTINAGE. THE AMERICANS
THEREFORE ARE THOSE WHO MAKE WORLDWIDE WAR AGAINST
OPIATES MOST CONSISTENTLY.

6. THERE ARE BATTLES FOUGHT ON THREE FRONT LINES:
A) THE ADDICTS ARE TO BE CURED BY TREATMENT; SUCCESS
IS MINIMAL, NINE OUT OF TEN HEROIN ADDICTS WILL RELAPSE.
B) THE BIG SUPPLY ROUTES ARE TO BE INTERRUPTED; HERE
THE AMERICANS ACHIEVED SPECTACULAR SUCCESSES IN PAST
YEARS, THE EUROPEANS RECENTLY. (WEST EUROPEAN OFFICIALS
SEIZED 700 KG OF HEROIN IN 1976, FOR THE FIRST TIME
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MORE THAN AMERICAN NARCOTICS AGENTS IN THE SAME YEAR). BUT THE CONFISCATED QUANTITIES DO NOT CUT OFF THE HEROIN TRADE, RATHER, THEY INDICATE HOW MIGHTY THE NARCOTICS STREAM HAS SWOLLEN.

C) THERE REMAINS THE CLOSING DOWN OF PRODUCTION AS THE LAST AND ONLY PROMISING POSSIBILITY OF WETTING THE POWDER OF THE "MURDERERS BY INSTALLMENTS".

SINCE 1930, THE WORLD'S NATIONS HAVE TRIED TO QET THE GROWING AREAS UNDER CONTROL. THE AMERICANS, ORIGINALLY THOSE MAINLY AFFECTED, USED AGENTS, MONEY AND POLITICAL PRESSURE. AT TIMES IT APPEARED AS IF THIS SILENT BUT MERCILESS WAR WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL. ACTUALLY, THERE ARE ONLY THREE POINTS ON EARTH WHERE OPIUM IS GROWN ON A LARGE SCALE. TURKEY, MEXICO AND SOUTH EAST ASIA ARE POPPY CULTIVATION AREAS. MEXICO LONG AGO BOUND ITSELF TO PREVENT CULTIVATION. OF COURSE, THERE STILL ARE POPPY FIELDS IN THIS HUGE COUNTRY BUT HEROIN PRODUCTION IS DECLINING YEAR BY YEAR. A SIMILAR SITUATION PREVAILS IN TURKEY, WHERE THE GOVERNMENT SOMETIMES TIGHTENS THE REINS, SOMETIMES LOOSENS THEM, BUT WHERE IN GENERAL THE CULTIVATION OF POPPY HAS DECREASED TO A FRACTION. THE TURKISH POPPY PEASANTS SUPPLIED THE AMERICAN MARKET FOR ALMOST A GENERATION. VIA LEVANTINE WHOLESALERS, THEIR RAW OPIUM WENT TO MARSEILLE WHERE IT WAS PROCESSED AND SMUGGLED TO AMERICA IN A THOUSAND DIFFERENT WAYS. THIS SO-CALLED "FRENCH CONNECTION" HAS BROKEN DOWN ALMOST COMPLETELY. TODAY, AMSTERDAM IS THE CENTER FOR THE ENTIRE OPIUM TRADE. AND THE "DUTCH CONNECTION" NOW HARDLY SUPPLIES THE US AND CANADA BUT RATHER WESTERN EUROPE, AND HERE MAINLY THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY. THE SALES STRATEGY IS DEVELOPED IN THE CHINESE QUARTER OF AMSTERDAM.

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7. THE LARGEST AREA OF PRODUCTION IS THE "GOLDEN TRIANGLE" WITH THE BASE IN LAOS AND THE TWO SIDES IN THAILAND AND BURMA. WHILE POPPY CULTIVATION HAS BEEN REDUCED CONSIDERABLY IN THAILAND AND MODERATELY IN BURMA UNDER SOFT AMERICAN PRESSURE, IT HAS EXPANDED IN THE PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF LAOS AND THE SALE IS IN BALES OF SEVERAL TONS. FOUR YEARS AGO, THE COALITION GOVERNMENT, DOMINATED BY COMMUNISTS ALREADY HAD ESTABLISHED A LIST OF THE "STRATEGIC EXPORT GOODS" OF THE COUNTRY. AT THAT TIME, RAW OPIUM WAS SHOWN ON THE LIST BESIDE COFFEE, TIN, AND WOOD. SINCE THE SEIZURE OF TOTAL POWER BY THE PATHET LAO, OPIUM HAS BEEN THE ONLY

"STRATEGIC EXPORT COMMODITY". THE ORGANIZATION IS AS SIMPLE AS IT IS EFFECTIVE. THE VILLAGE COLLECTIVES GATHER THE RAW OPIUM OF THEIR MEMBERS WHO ARE OBLIGED UNDER PENALTY TO DELIVER IT TO THE COLLECTIVE AT FIXED PRICES. IN PROPORTION TO THEIR PREVAILING PRODUCTION CONDITIONS, THE COLLECTIVES SUPPLY REGIONAL CENTERS. WHEN TWO TONS ARE ACCUMULATED IN THESE CENTERS THEY INFORM THE TRADE MINISTRY IN VIENTIANE. THE COMRADE DEFENSE MINISTER MAKES AVAILABLE AN OLD DC-3 TO THE COMRADE TRADE MINISTER. IN VIENTIANE THE MATERIAL IS COLLECTED AND SORTED OUT IN THE WAREHOUSES OF THE TRADE MINISTRY: LAM XANG ROAD 43-47. IN MAY OF THIS YEAR, FOR EXAMPLE, THERE WERE ABOUT 30 TONS STORED THERE. ACCORDING TO STATEMENTS OF PATHET LAO FUNCTION-ARIES WHO HAVE FLED TO THAILAND, VIENTIANE EXPORTED ABOUT 125 TONS OF RAW OPIUM IN 1976. WHERE DO THESE GIGANTIC QUANTITIES GO, WHICH, FOR EXAMPLE, WOULD SUFFICE FOR THE POPULATION OF THE BENELUX COUNTRIES TO INJECT THEMSELVES TO DEATH IN A FEW MONTHS BY

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TAKING EVEN "NORMAL" DOSES? THE IMPORTERS ARE KNOWN, BUT FOR THE TIME BEING IT CAN BE SAID WHAT IS DONE WITH ONLY HALF OF THE LAOTIAN OPIUM. THE DISTRIBUTION IS CARRIED OUT SCHEMATICALLY AND LOOKED AS FOLLOWS IN 1976: 50 PERCENT, I.E. ABOUT 60 TONS, WENT INTO THE

WORLD TRADE VIA CHINESE; 40 PERCENT, I.E. ABOUT 50 TONS, WENT TO THE SOVIET UNION; 10 PERCENT, MORE THAN 10 TONS, WERE SENT TO VIETNAM. THE WHOLE LAOTIAN OPIUM BUSINESS IS IN THE HANDS OF TWO MEN: KHAMTA PHOMSAENGSAVAN, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE FOREIGN TRADE DIVISION IN THE MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY, AND LOY CHANSAVAT, CHIEF OF EXPORT IN THE SAME FOREIGN TRADE DIVISION. THE BALES WHICH ARE DELIVERED TO MOSCOW AND HANOI ARE "OFFICIAL" SALES HANDLED ON GOVERNMENT LEVEL. THE SOVIET UNION HAS A TRADE MISSION IN VIENTIANE. THE LAO - SOVIET CONTRACTS ARE SIGNED THERE. THE RUSSIANS TAKE CARE OF THE TRANSPORTATION VIA THEIR OWN AIRLINE. THE OPIUM FOR VIETNAM IS SENT BY TRUCK TO HANOI. THESE CONTRACTS ARE ALL PREPARED BY LOY IN THE LAOTIAN TRADE MINISTRY. UNOFFICIAL SALES, HOWEVER, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ARE ALL HANDLED BY THE TOP FUNCTIONARY, KHAMTHA, IN CONFIDENCE. THE CHINESE DEALERS COME FROM THAILAND WITH FALSE PASSPORTS AND MEET PSEUDONYMOUSLY WITH THE LAO IN HIS OFFICE. WHEN THE CONTRACT IS CONCLUDED, THE BUYER PAYS IN US DOLLARS. HE WILL PICK UP THE OPIUM IN THE LAM XANG ROAD BY TRUCK. THERE ARE NO TAXES, COMMISSION OR EXPENSES INVOLVED, THE PRICE IS FIXED AND IS 50 PERCENT ABOVE THE PRICES GRANTED TO THE RUSSIANS AND VIETNAMESE. IT CAN BE ASSUMED, HOWEVER, THAT NEITHER MOSCOW NOR HANOI MAKE DIRECT PAYMENTS. THE OPIUM DELIVERIES ARE USED FOR COMPENSATION OF WAR ASSISTANCE AND CURRENT IMPORTS. JUST IN SEPTEMBER 1976 THE USSR GRANTED LAOS AN INTEREST-FREE LOAN OF \$32 MILLION; SIGNIFICANTLY FOR THE PROMOTION OF SPECIAL, AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS AND ESTABLISHMENT OF A PHARMACEUTICAL PLANT WHICH WILL LATER BE IN A POSITION TO PRODUCE HEROIN. SEVERAL TONS OF OPIUM WHICH MOSCOW AND HANOI RECEIVED LAST YEAR WERE OBVIOUSLY PROCESSED FOR MEDICAL PURPOSES. IT IS ALSO LIKELY THAT HANOI IS SELLING SOME THOUSAND KILOGRAMS OF ITS SHARE IN HONGKONG AGAINST FOREIGN CURRENCY. WHAT HAPPENS TO THE REST OF THE VIETNAMESE OPIUM AND THE BULK OF THE SOVIET OPIUM CAN ONLY BE GUESSED AND NOT PROVEN. IN ANY CASE, IT IS CERTAIN THAT THE SOVIET UNION AND VIETNAM ARE SUPPRESSING IN THE MOST BRUTAL WAY THE SALE OF HARD DRUGS IN THEIR OWN COUNTRIES.

8. THE DUTCH CONNECTION EXTENDS FROM THE WAREHOUSES ON LAM XANG ROAD TO THE CHINATOWN OF AMSTERDAM. THE HEROIN INFILTRATES INTO THE FRG IN A TYPE OF OSMOSIS, IN SMALL AND VERY SMALL QUANTITIES, BUT IN A THOUSAND WAYS. JUST ONE SINGLE KILOGRAM PROVIDES 20,000 SHOTS, AND THE PRICE OF ONE GRAM IS PRESENTLY

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ONE THOUSAND DM. IN ANY EVENT, AT PRESENT PRICES THE
HALF OF THE LAOTIAN PRODUCTION WHICH IS EXPORTED
"THE CHINESE WAY" IS SUFFICIENT FOR ALL THE ADDICTS
OF THE WORLD.
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